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ABSTRACT

A study was conducted to determine the relationship between selected preparation factors and the existence of outstanding leadership skills among community college presidents. Surveys were sent to all 147 presidents of public, two-year institutions in the Upper Midwest United States, with 85% (n=125) responding. A peer rating method was used to divide the respondents into an outstanding/leading group and a normative group, while the questionnaire determined respondents' characteristics with respect to the following nine preparation factors: (1) possession of a terminal degree; (2) the specific study of community college leadership as an academic major; (3) an active personal research and publication agenda; (4) specific preparation as a change agent; (5) identification as a community college insider; (6) participation as a protegee in a protegee/mentor relationship; (7) involvement in a peer network; (8) leadership development activities outside of graduate program; and (9) knowledge of technology. The peer selection process identified 17 of the 125 respondents as leading presidents, while an analysis of responses indicated that this group displayed higher rates of having earned a terminal degree, having majored in higher education with an emphasis on community college leadership, publishing and presenting scholarly work, involvement with both peer networks and mentors, and having had non-traditional paths to their presidencies. Includes recommendations and questions for further research. Contains 25 references. (TGI)

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Preparation Factors Common in Outstanding Community College Presidents

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PREPARATION FACTORS COMMON IN OUTSTANDING COMMUNITY COLLEGE PRESIDENTS

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This study identified and explored preparation factors which may contribute to the development of outstanding community college leadership skills. Surveys designed to collect both demographic information and information on the respondent's leadership preparation were sent to all presidents of public, two year institutions located in the Upper Midwest. A return rate of 85% (125/147) was achieved. A peer rating method was used to divide the respondents into two groups; outstanding leading and normative.

Nine preparation factors were identified that may contribute to the development of leaderships skills appropriate for a community college setting. These factors are: a) an earned terminal degree, b) a major within the terminal degree focused on the study of Higher Education community college leadership, c) a research and publications agenda, d) specific preparation as a change agent, e) identification as a community college insider, f) participation as a protégé in a mentor-protégé relationship, g) involvement with a peer network, h) leadership development activities outside of their graduate program, and i) knowledge of technology.

The peer selected outstanding leading group was 100 % Caucasian, predominately male (94%) and without exception married. The outstanding leading presidents displayed a higher rate of having earned a terminal degree (94% versus 80%), a higher rate of having majored in Higher Education emphasis on community college leadership (53% versus 32%), a higher rate of both publishing and presenting scholarly work (published within the last 5 years, 59% versus 25%; presented within the last 5 years, 53% versus 35%), and more involvement with both peer networks and mentors. Additionally, outstanding leading presidents displayed a high rate of non-traditional paths to their presidencies.

What makes some community college presidents effective and others ineffective? What are the preparatory factors that contribute to the development of outstanding community college leadership ability? Can the quality of community college senior leadership be strengthened through improved preparation of future leaders?

Community colleges are operating in increasingly challenging and complex environments. Murry and Hammons (1995) noted that community colleges have evolved into "large, complex organizations with hundreds of employees, sprawling physical plants, and multimillion dollar budgets" (p. 207). In 1994, the Institute for Future Studies, Macomb Community College, identified fourteen "critical issues" facing America's community colleges (foreword). Included in the critical fourteen were traditional issues such as finance, accountability and changing technology, in addition to less traditional community college issues such as fundamental uncertainty (p. 1), "The Shadow College" (p. 22) and "The Public Trust" (p. 25).

Additional examples of challenges facing the community colleges are abundant. It is in this increasingly complex and difficult environment that contemporary community college leaders must operate. This study explored factors common in the backgrounds of outstanding/leading community college presidents.

Roueche, Baker, & Rose (1989) claimed that "leaders make a difference" (p.17). Murry and Hammons (1995) maintained that both the current and future success of community colleges depends on the skill of the institution's managers. They stressed the importance of having administrators with strong leadership and management ability. Kirkland and Ratcliff (1994) argued that changing CEO's is a "fundamental and profound decision for a community college" (p.3). They suggested that colleges facing significant problems can often positively impact their situation with a change in leadership. Their research supports the notion that governing boards believe that "presidents make a difference" (p. 10). Further supporting the idea that outstanding leaders make a difference, Nanus (1992) stated: "The need for effective visionary leadership is becoming so great as to pose a critical challenge to all concerned with education, including parents, schools, universities, and in-house training programs" (p. 181) while Elsner (1984) warned of a developing leadership crisis in the American community college movement.

Outside of education, the belief that leadership makes a difference is equally well stated. O'Toole (1995) noted the growing emphasis on effective leadership as a core component of any effort focused on long term competitiveness. Farkas and DeBacker (1996), Hammer and Champy (1993), Hawley (1993) and other contemporary business writers have expended considerable energy describing the importance of enlightened, competent leadership.

If community colleges are operating in increasingly complex environments and if "leaders make a difference", then the preparation of the next generation of leaders becomes extremely important (Roueche, Baker, & Rose, 1989, p. 17). Harris (1996), Banach (1994), Cohen, Brawer, & Associates (1994), Hammer and Champy (1993), Vaughan (1995, 89, & 86) and others support the idea that development of a new generation of senior leadership for America's community colleges is imperative if these institutions are to successfully operate in the increasingly complex environment previously discussed.

The importance of leadership preparation has long been acknowledged. In the 1950's, both the W. K. Kellogg Foundation and the Carnegie Foundation supported graduate level, preparatory activities focused on the two-year college. In 1959, the University of Michigan supported the development of a graduate level leadership program in two-year college administration (Young, 1995). While discussing the importance of well prepared leaders, numerous authors have noted the increased emphasis on terminal degrees as a requirement for entry into senior management positions at community colleges. In discussing the "gatekeeper" function that doctoral programs perform, Townsend (1995) stated: "If you want to become a community college president, you're going to need a doctorate. In our credential-oriented society, possession of the doctorate is the sine qua non for most community college senior-level administrative positions, especially the presidency" (p. 4). While discussing community college presidential vacancies, Vaughan's 1991 research indicated "the successful candidate ultimately selected almost always holds an earned doctorate" (1994, p. 21). Vaughan (1989), quoting an unnamed community college president, notes, "[the] doctorate is, in many cases, the key to the executive washroom. It is considered a minimum" (pp. 125-126). Keim (1992) noted that there are now 33 university based educational programs focused on preparing their students for service in community colleges.

While the increased emphasis on terminal degrees as a prerequisite to community college senior management positions is generally acknowledged, the value of completing terminal degree programs as appropriate preparation for community college senior management positions is not well established. Typical of the current literature is Townsend's (1995) disclaimer; "Setting aside the question of whether possessing a doctorate of any kind truly qualifies someone to be an administrator, ..." (p. 1).

In his 1986 book, The Community College Presidency, Vaughan reported results of his efforts to survey seventy-five leading community college presidents regarding "personal attributes, skills, and abilities required of the successful president" (p. 185). Vaughan found that the presidents identified as national leaders rated integrity and judgment as the attributes of most importance; with courage, concern and flexibility rated as highly important. In the area of presidents' skills and abilities, the presidents identified as leaders named "produce results" as the skill of highest importance. Skills and abilities identified as extremely important included "select people" and "resolve conflicts" (Vaughan, 1986).

The most striking data reported by Vaughan (1986) was the ranking of "publications" as the least valued presidential skill or ability. "The lowest-ranking skill or ability for both the successful president and for subordinates is the ability to produce scholarly publications" (p. 188). Vaughan repeated this research in 1991, achieving results very similar to those reported in 1986 (Vaughan, 1994). Supporting Vaughan's findings, Hammons and Keller (1990) suggested that future community college presidents will need to be excellent communicators, "but they will not be expected to be writers" (p. 40).

Is Vaughan correct in reporting that "the lowest-ranking skill or ability for both the successful president and for subordinates is the ability to produce scholarly publications" (p. 188)? Is Townsend (1995) correct in questioning "whether possessing a doctorate of any kind truly qualifies someone to be an administrator, ..." (p. 1)? What are the factors that do contribute to the preparation of exemplary community college leaders? What role does academic preparation play in the development of community college leadership and which activities outside of academics contribute to the development of exemplary senior leadership?

METHODOLOGY

This study used a peer rating method for dividing the sample of community college presidents into two groups, one normative and one "leading/outstanding" (Vaughan, 1986). Survey methodology was used to collect data from both groups. The data gathering geographic area was the Upper-Midwest and included Illinois, Iowa, Minnesota, Missouri, Nebraska, North Dakota, South Dakota and Wisconsin. Presidents surveyed work at public community colleges, technical colleges and junior colleges with two-year associate degrees as their highest offering located within the identified geographic area. Presidents of independent, tribal, non-profit, and religious-affiliated institutions were not included in the survey.

The 1996 Higher Education Directory was used to identify institutions located within the specified geographic area and to identify types of institutions (public versus independent/for profit, as an example). Presidents of all institutions matching the selection criteria (public-2 year) and located within the identified geographical area were included in the survey.

Nine factors which may contribute to the development of exemplary community college leaders were identified. They are: 1) possession of a terminal degree, 2) the specific

study of community college leadership as an academic major, 3) an active personal research and publication agenda, 4) preparation as a change agent, 5) previous career position, 6) relationship with a mentor, 7) development of a peer network, 8) previous participation in a leadership preparation activity, and 9) knowledge of technology. These factors were used in the development of the survey instrument. The survey instrument also collected demographic data on the samples.

Traditional survey methodologies were employed. Three rounds of data collection were conducted which resulted in a return rate of eighty-five percent (85%).

FINDINGS

The peer selection process identified 17 of the 125 respondents as outstanding/leading community college presidents, with the remaining 108 placed in the normative community college president's group. Seven of the survey's 43 items directly addressed the demographics of the responding presidents. Of the 108 respondents placed in the normative group, the majority were Caucasian (92, 85.2%), male (86, 79.6%) and married (94, 87.0%). On average they were 54 years old, had assumed their first presidency at 44.7 years of age, and had served as a community college president for 9.1 years. The outstanding/leading presidents group was all Caucasian (17, 100%), more male (16, 94.1%), and without exception married (17, 100%). On average, presidents in the outstanding/leading group were about the same age as the presidents in the normative group. Presidents in the outstanding/leading group had assumed their first presidency at a slightly younger age then the respondents in the normative group. The outstanding/leading presidents had served as community college presidents slightly longer than their normative counterparts (10.9 yrs. versus 9.1 yrs.)(see table 1).

Table 1. Characteristics of the respondents

	Outstanding/Leading n = 17	Normative n = 108	Entire Population n = 125
Years in present position			
Years	9.18 yrs.	6.55 yrs.	6.90 yrs.
Range	1 yr. to 16 yrs.	1 yr. to 32 yrs.	1 yr. to 32 yrs.
Years as Community College President			
Years	10.88 yrs.	9.10 yrs.	9.31 yrs.
Range	1 yr. to 21 yrs.	1 yr. to 32 yrs.	1 yr. to 32 yrs.
Marital Status			
Single		2; 1.9%	2; 1.6%
Married	17; 100%	94; 87%	111; 88.8%
Divorced		7; 6.5%	7; 5.6%
Spouse Deceased		2; 1.9%	2; 1.6%
Gender			
Male	16; 94.1%	86; 79.6%	102; 81.6%
Female	1; 5.9%	20; 18.5%	21; 16.8%

Table 1. continued

	Outstanding/Leading	Normative	Entire Population
Race/Ethnicity			
Black/African Am		9; 8.3%	9; 7.2%
Hispanic/Latino		4; 3.7%	4; 3.2%
White/Caucasian	17; 100%	92; 85.2%	109; 87.2%
Other		1; .9%	1; .8%
Age			
Years	53.65 yrs.	54.02 yrs.	53.97 yrs.
Std. Dev.	4.23 yrs.	6.00 yrs.	5.78 yrs.
Range	42 to 61 yrs.	38 to 68 yrs.	38 to 68 yrs.
Age at 1st Community College Presidency			
Age	42.53 yrs.	44.68 yrs.	44.39 yrs.
Std. Dev.	6.70 yrs.	6.45 yrs.	6.50 yrs.
Range	29 to 53 yrs.	32 to 59 yrs.	29 to 59 yrs.

Responding presidents provided data regarding 125 institutions. Comprehensive community colleges comprised the largest segment of institutional types (96, 76.8%) with vocational/technical colleges second (22, 17.6%) followed by five colleges (4.0%) that reported no technical/vocational offerings and two (1.6%) self classifying as "other". Presidents identified as outstanding/leading represented 15 comprehensive community colleges and 2 colleges with no vocational/technical offerings. While 17.6% of the institutions described within the data are identified as vocational/technical, none of their presidents were peer selected as outstanding/leading. Institutions led by participating presidents had an averaged enrollment of 6,652 students (headcount). Institutions led by presidents identified as outstanding/leading were somewhat larger, with an average enrollment of 7,159 students (headcount). The state by state distribution of institutions led by presidents selected for inclusion in the outstanding/leading group was similar (within plus or minus one institution per state) to the state by state distribution of the study's entire set of institutions (see table 2).

This study's first question focused on possession of an earned terminal degree. Both the review of literature and the increased use of the terminal degree as a minimum requirement for service as a community college president suggest that earning a terminal degree was an important component of preparation to lead a community college. Two items on the survey instrument explored this issue, first asking the respondents to identify their current highest degree and then asking them to indicate their highest degree when they first served as a community college president. When comparing terminal degree attainment of outstanding/leading presidents versus normative presidents, outstanding/leading presidents displayed a higher rate of terminal degree attainment both at the start of their first presidency and at the time of the survey (see tables 3). Additionally, the data indicate that outstanding/leading presidents with a terminal degree are more likely to have earned a Ph.D. than are terminal degree holding presidents from the normative sample (11of 16 or 68.7% versus 48 of 86 or 55.8%).

Table 2. Characteristics of the institutions

	Outstanding/Leading n = 17	Normative n = 108	Entire Population n = 125
State in which institution located			
Illinois	4; 23.5%	37; 34.3%	41; 32.8%
Iowa	4; 23.5%	15; 13.9%	19; 15.2%
Minnesota	2; 11.8%	17; 15.7%	19; 15.2%
Missouri	4; 23.5%	14; 13.0%	18; 14.4%
Nebraska	1; 5.9%	5; 4.6%	6; 4.8%
North Dakota	1; 5.9%	3; 2.8%	4; 3.2%
South Dakota	0; 0%	4; 3.7%	4; 3.2%
Wisconsin	1; 5.9%	13; 12.0%	14; 11.2%
FTE, Fall 1995			
Mean	3,981.8 students	3,043.2 students	3,175.0 students
Range	840 to 11,000	386 to 35,000	3,86 to 35,000
Headcount, Fall 1995			
Mean	7,158.8 students	6,565.1 students	6,652.3 students
Range	1,110 to 24,244	503 to 70,000	503 to 70,000
Type of institution			
Comprehensive	15; 88.2%	81; 75.0%	96; 76.8%
No vocational/technical	2; 11.8%	3; 2.8%	5; 4.0%
Technical or vocational		22; 20.4%	22; 17.6%
Other		2; 1.9%	2; 1.6%

Table 3. Earned terminal degree

	Outstanding/Leading n = 17	Normative n = 108	Entire Population n = 125
Highest degree currently held-			
Ed.D./Ph.D.	16; 94.1%	86; 79.6%	102 81.6%
All other degrees	1; 5.9%	20; 18.5%	21 16.8%
Missing		2; 1.9%	2; 1.6%
Highest degree held at first presidency			
Ed.D./Ph.D.	15; 88.2%	80; 74.1%	95; 76.0%
All other degrees	2; 11.8%	26; 24.1%	28; 22.4%
Missing		2; 1.9%	2; 1.6%

The study's second question focused on the specific study of community college leadership as an academic major. This question reflects the idea that the systematic study of higher education/community college leadership may positively impact community college leadership ability. Respondents provided data on their major field of study in their highest degree. Presidents identified as outstanding/leading reported a 20.5% higher rate of having a

major in their highest degree that focused on the study of higher education/community college leadership than the presidents in the normative group (52.9% versus 32.4%). The study of Higher Education, with either a focus on community college leadership or other areas, was the academic major for 70.5% of the outstanding/leading presidents while 52.8% of the normative presidents had majored in Higher Education (see table 4).

Table 4. Major field of study-highest degree

	Outstanding/Leading n = 17	Normative n = 108	Entire Population n = 125
Major field of study			
Higher Ed/emphasis on community college leadership	9; 52.9%	35; 32.4%	44; 35.2%
Higher Ed/emphasis other than cc leadership	3; 17.6%	22; 20.4%	25; 20.0%
Other education	3; 17.6%	24; 22.2%	27; 21.6%
Other	2; 11.8%	25; 23.1%	27; 21.6%
Missing		2; 1.9%	2; 1.6%

The study's third question focused on the pursuit of a personal research and publication agenda. Both the literature reviewed and the emphasis placed on research and publication within terminal degree programs designed to prepare future community college senior leaders suggested that pursuit of a personal research and publication agenda should be explored as a component of exemplary leadership preparation. The vast majority of presidents from both samples reported that they were not pursuing a personal research/publication agenda. However, presidents in the leading/outstanding sample reported more scholarly output in all categories examined then did presidents in the normative sample. The difference between the two samples is most apparent when the data are analyzed on the basis of publishing-yes/no (all publishing categories combined). Within the last five years, 58.8% of the outstanding/leading presidents had published while in the same period, 25.0% of the normative presidents had published (see table 5).

The study's fourth question focused on preparation as a change agent. Both scholarly and popular literature suggest that preparation as a change agent is an important component of preparation for leadership in the twenty-first century and beyond. The vast majority of respondents (91%+) from both samples consider themselves change agents and reported that those that work with them also consider the respondents change agents. A higher percentage of presidents identified as leading/outstanding reported preparation for a role as a change agent as part of their graduate program than did normative presidents (47.1% versus 35.2%). Additionally, a higher percentage of normative presidents reported no preparation as a change agent (of any kind) than did leading/outstanding presidents (24.1% versus 11.8%).

Table 5. Personal research and publication agenda

	Outstanding/Leading n = 17	Normative n = 108	Entire Population n = 125
Currently pursuing a personal research/publication agenda			
Yes	4; 23.5%	18; 16.7%	22; 17.6%
No	13; 76.5%	89; 82.4%	102; 81.6%
Presented research results at a professional meeting within the last 5 years			
Yes	9; 52.9%	36; 34.6%	45; 36.0%
No	7; 41.2%	68; 63.0%	75; 60.0%
Number of respondents who published within the last 5 years, all categories of publishing combined			
Published	10; 58.8%	27; 25.0%	37; 29.6%
Did not publish	7; 41.2%	81; 75.0%	88; 70.4%

The study's fifth question focused on the respondents status as community college insiders. Both the literature and the recently emerging practice of favoring community college insiders for senior community college leadership positions suggest that positioning one's-self as a community college insider is an important component of preparation to lead a community college. The majority of presidents in both samples reflect a community college past that would identify them as community college insiders. Less than one in five presidents identified as outstanding/leading came to their first presidency from a position outside of a community college while even fewer of the presidents identified as normative came to their first community college presidency from positions outside of community colleges (17.6% versus 10.2%).

Paths to the presidency have been previously explored with emphasis often placed on the academic path of teaching, department chair, division dean, academic vice president and finally, president. Community college presidents participating in this study were asked about their immediate previous position prior to assuming their first presidency. The third item in table 6 reflects a re-coding of these data into two categories, academic and non-academic. For example, the position of dean of instruction was coded as an academic previous position while the positions of dean of student services or dean of business services were coded as non-academic. Each of the responses of "other community college position" was reviewed and placed in a category; vice president of personnel as a non-academic position as an example. When coded in this manner, the data indicate a large difference in the type of immediate previous position held by presidents in the two samples. Presidents identified as outstanding/leading were much less likely to have held academically orientated immediate previous positions than were presidents in the normative sample (23.5% versus 64.8%). Further, the data indicate that presidents in the outstanding/leading sample are less likely to have been community college presidents prior to their current presidency than presidents in the normative sample (29.4% versus 39.8%). The data also indicate that presidents in the

outstanding/leading sample have a lower rate of having taught in a community college, either full or part time, than do presidents in the normative sample (full time, 29.4% versus 41.7%, part time, 58.8% versus 63%) (see table 6).

Table 6. Status as a community college insider

	Outstanding/Leading n = 17	Normative n = 108	Entire Population n = 125
Full time teaching experience in a community college			
Yes	5; 29.4%	45; 41.7%	50; 40.0%
No	12; 70.6%	62; 57.4%	74; 59.2%
Part time teaching experience in a community college			
Yes	10; 58.8%	68; 63%	78; 62.4%
No	7; 41.2%	40; 37%	47 37.6%
Community college position held immediately prior to your first community college presidency-combined categories			
Academic	4; 23.5%	70; 64.8%	74; 59.2%
Non-academic	11; 64.7%	32; 29.6%	43; 34.4%
Unknown	2; 11.8%	6; 5.6%	8; 6.4%
Moved into current CEO position from another community college CEO position			
Yes	5; 29.4%	43; 39.8%	48; 38.4%
No	12; 70.6%	65; 60.2%	77; 61.6%
Number of community college presidencies held by respondents (including current position)			
1	13; 76.5%	64; 59.3%	77; 61.6%
2	2; 11.8%	31; 28.7%	33; 26.4%
3	2; 11.8%	9; 8.3%	11; 8.8%

The study's sixth question explored the importance of mentor-protégé relationships on the preparation of community college leaders. Mentor-protégé relationships are increasingly cited as an important component of leadership preparation. Survey respondents were asked if they had participated as a protégé in a mentor-protégé relationship as part of their preparation for a community college presidency. Presidents identified as outstanding/leading participated as a protégé in mentor-protégé relationships at a higher rate than did presidents identified as normative (47.1% versus 38.0%). Further, presidents identified as outstanding/leading reported participating in more mentor-protégé relationships on average than did presidents identified as normative. The most common place for development of mentor-protégé relationships for presidents from both samples was a community college work environment.

The study's seventh question focused on utilization of a peer network as a component of preparation for senior community college leadership. Presidents identified as outstanding/leading reported a higher rate of involvement with both academic (graduate program) based and workplace based peer networks than did presidents identified as

normative. However, normative presidents indicated a higher rate of involvement with social and business based peer networks than did outstanding/leading presidents. The majority of presidents from both samples indicated that a peer network based on previous community college work experience provided assistance in preparing for and assuming their presidency (see table 7).

Table 7. Peer networks that assisted in preparation for a cc presidency

	Outstanding/Leading n = 17	Normative n = 108	Entire Population n = 125
Peer network within your graduate program			
Yes	7, 41.2%	21, 19.4%	28, 22.4%
No	10, 58.8%	86, 79.6%	96, 76.8%
Peer network within a prior community college work setting			
Yes	11, 64.7%	61, 56.5%	72, 57.6%
No	6, 35.3%	45, 41.7%	51, 40.8%
Peer network within a social/business setting			
Yes	5, 29.4%	44, 40.7%	49, 39.2%
No	12, 70.6%	62, 57.4%	74, 59.2%

The study's eighth research focused on participation in specific leadership development activities outside of graduate degree work as a component of preparation for senior community college leadership. Both the literature and the proliferation of leadership development activities suggest that participation in leadership preparation activities outside of traditional graduate programs be investigated. Prior to their first presidency, presidents identified as outstanding/leading participated in leadership preparation programs at a lower rate than did those presidents identified as normative (23.5% versus 44.4%). However, after assuming their first presidency, outstanding/leading presidents participated in leadership development activities at a markedly higher rate than did presidents identified as normative (64.7% versus 38.9%)(see table 8).

The study's final question examined knowledge of technology as a component of leadership preparation. The projected impact of the technological revolution on educational enterprises such as community colleges is well documented. The widespread belief that modern technology will substantially impact community colleges in the near future suggests that the relationship between knowledge of technology and outstanding community college leadership be explored. Seven survey items examined this factor, asking a number of questions about the respondents use of technology and then asking the respondent to self-rate their knowledge of technology.

The vast majority of respondents reported some personal utilization of contemporary technology with 95% of respondents having a personal computer (PC) in their office, over 80% of both samples having PCs at home and the majority of respondents reporting active use of PCs for tasks such as email, composing letters/memos, and accessing the internet. Differences between the outstanding/leading sample and the normative sample were small with

outstanding/leading presidents self-rating themselves slightly higher on knowledge of technology than normative respondents (6.24 versus 5.94, scale of 0-10 with 10 being high) Outstanding leading presidents reported more personal use of technology on three of the four items that examined use of technology however again, all items reflected small differences between groups.

Table 8. Participation in leadership preparation programs

	Outstanding/Leading n = 17	Normative n = 108	Entire Population n = 125
Previous to first presidency, participated in leadership prep. program			
Yes	4; 23.5%	48; 44.4%	52; 41.6%
No	13; 76.5%	58; 53.7%	71; 56.8%
After assuming 1st presidency, participated in leadership prep. program			
Yes	11; 64.7%	42; 38.9%	53; 42.4%
No	6; 35.3%	64; 59.3%	70; 56.0%

A statistical test for comparing two binomial proportions identified statistically significant differences between the two groups on 4 of the 9 identified factors (terminal degree attainment, majors which focused on community college leadership, production of scholarly work, and involvement with a peer network).

CONCLUSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS FOR PRACTICE

Descriptive Data: Characteristics of the respondents in this study such as average age, education level, years of experience, marital status, gender, race, etc. closely match characteristic of community college presidents described in other efforts. Demographic differences between the two samples were observed with the most striking being related to race, gender and marital status. Specifically, presidents in the leading/outstanding sample were more likely to be male, married and Caucasian than presidents in the normative sample. For example, almost twenty percent of the normative sample is female yet only one female president was peer selected for inclusion in the outstanding/leading sample. Minority presidents fared even more poorly with 15% of the normative sample made up of non-whites yet the outstanding/leading sample was 100% white (see table 1). While senior leadership of community colleges has become more inclusive, these data indicate that the vast majority of peer identified exemplary community college leadership positions are held by white males, raising troubling issues related to true inclusion. Are persons of color and females relegated to lead in second tier community colleges which do not provide opportunities for the development of exemplary leadership skills or the visibility to become known by their peers? Or is the peer rating system utilized to select the outstanding/leading sample in this study flawed in such a manner that it excludes minorities and women? Are there other factors at play? These are obvious questions for future study.

Question #1: Presidents in the outstanding/leading sample had a higher level of attainment of terminal degrees than the presidents in the normative sample. This difference in educational achievement was true at both the time of the respondents first presidency (82% versus 74%) and at the time of the survey (94% versus 80%, statistically significant). The outstanding/leading sample had no members that had a Bachelor's, Master's or Ed. Specialist as their highest current degree. In the time period between attainment of their first presidency and the survey, 12% of the outstanding/leading sample had completed a Ph.D. while only 2% of the normative sample had completed a Ph.D. (note that the outstanding/leading presidents had served as presidents on average 1.8 years longer than normative presidents, giving them slightly more time to complete a degree program). These results would appear to support the emerging trend of requiring completion of a terminal degree as a minimum requirement for attaining a community college presidency.

Question #2: The outstanding/leading presidents reported that their major in their highest degree focused on the study of higher education/community college leadership at a statistically significant greater rate than did presidents in the normative sample (53% versus 32%). This is perhaps the most surprising result of this study as it contradicts advice commonly given to those who aspire to community college presidencies. It is commonly suggested that someone who aspires to senior leadership of community colleges needs to complete a terminal degree program (sometime an analogy to a union card is used) but the specific area of study is not particularly important. Anthony, (1986) in a paper titled *Climbing Up the Administrative Ladder* presented at the 1986 AACJC national meeting stated, "The doctorate as a degree, is important. The subject matter relating to that doctorate is not. So the key is to get the doctoral degree" (p. 2).

This study's finding that outstanding/leading community college president's preparation is significantly more likely to include the systematic study of community college leadership suggests that aspiring community college leaders should be counseled toward graduate programs focused on the study of community college leadership. Further, this result would suggest that additional support be provided to the 33 graduate programs that provide leadership training for community college professionals.

Question #3: Respondents from both samples, when asked if they were pursuing a personal research and publication agenda, replied overwhelmingly that they were not. This rejection of research and publication in a community college setting is consistent with community college culture and community colleges' self image as institutions focused on teaching, not research. Given the presidents' negative response to the question regarding pursuit of a research and publication agenda and the prevailing anti-research culture of the community college movement, the volume of scholarly work reported by the respondents, particularly the outstanding/leading presidents is surprising. For example, 59% of the outstanding/leading presidents reported having published a scholarly work within the last five years. Twenty-five percent (25%) of the normative presidents had published in this time period. Additionally, the outstanding/leading presidents were active in presenting research results at professional meetings with 53% of them having presented within the last five years and 12% of them giving five or more presentations in this time period. Thirty-five percent (35%) of the normative group had presented within the previous five years.

While the volume of scholarly work being produced by the respondents is surprising, particularly within the context of community college culture, high correlations between publishing/presenting and inclusion in the outstanding/leading sample are perhaps not

surprising given the peer selection methodology utilized in this study. Having your peers select you as outstanding/leading requires that your peers know something of what you are doing. An exemplary community college president serving in an obscure college and being passive about sharing information about their efforts would most likely not be selected via the peer rating method as an outstanding/leading president. Be that as it may, both samples report scholarship activity with the outstanding/leading sample reporting higher levels of both presenting at professional meeting and scholarly publishing. Criticism of leadership preparation graduate programs that contain a substantial emphasis on research and publication may turn out to be in error.

Question #4: Responding presidents, both from the normative sample and from the outstanding/leading sample overwhelmingly self reported a belief that they are change agents. They further reported that the vast majority of people who work with them also consider them change agents. These two items, self perception of the respondents as a change agent and the respondents perception of whether those working with them perceived them as a change agent were among the items studied that showed the least difference between samples. It appears that almost all of the respondents think of themselves as change agents and believe that others also think of them as change agents.

Differences between the outstanding/leading presidents and the normative presidents did emerge when they were asked what sort of preparation they had received as a change agent. Twenty-four percent (24%) of the normative presidents indicated that they had not received preparation as a change agent while only 12% of the outstanding/leading presidents indicated no preparation. Of additional interest, almost half of the outstanding/leading presidents reported receiving preparation as a change agent within their graduate programs versus about one third of the normative presidents reporting preparation as a change agent within their graduate programs.

The community college system is generally credited with being the most nimble of the various higher education systems. This study's population of community college presidents reflected this with both samples overwhelmingly reporting that they see themselves as change agents. It is not surprising that the outstanding/leading president display a higher rate of having received training in this important area. The results also suggest that higher education graduate programs play an important role in preparing leaders for the task of leading change.

Question #5: The vast majority of this study's respondents would be classified as community college insiders based on their previous work experience. While in the past , it was not unusual for a new community college president to be recruited from outside the community college system (from a state department position or a university position as examples) our samples were consistent with the trend reported favoring community college insiders for senior leadership positions within community colleges.

A common path to the presidency of community colleges has developed and is well reported in the literature, often in the form of advice to those who would be community college presidents. This path includes teaching within a community college, movement upward to a department chair position, further movement upward to a director's position, then to a dean's position, then a vice presidency and finally, a community college presidency. The job titles may vary slightly, yet in this often discussed path to the presidency, the various steps always include supervision of academic functions. Aspiring presidents are counseled that the vice presidency level should be vice president with responsibility for academics not, vice president with responsibility for student services as an example.

The majority (65%) of the normative presidents' path to their first presidency reflected the traditional academic path to the presidency described above. The majority (65%) of outstanding/leading presidents came to their first presidency from a background contrary to the traditional academic path. Why does a strong relationship exist within this population between non-traditional paths to the presidency and outstanding/leading identification by their peers? Do years of working in a faculty dominated culture condition future leaders to accept the status quo, or do naturally strong leaders migrate away from the collaborative nature of faculty units? Is strong leadership, leadership intent on positive, rapid change contrary to survival and advancement in an academic culture? Does the academic path, particularly the low salary levels for entry level community college teaching and beginning administrative positions, turn potentially exemplary leaders to other occupations before opportunity for middle and upper management positions are available? These are very important and exciting questions for future study and discussion.

Question #6: Almost half of the outstanding/leading presidents had participated as a protégé in a mentor-protégé relationship compared to slightly more than one third of the normative group. Additionally, presidents identified as outstanding/leading who had participated in these relations generally participated in more mentor-protégé relationships than did normative presidents who had participated in mentor-protégé relationships. Numerous sources suggest that participation as a protégé in a mentor-protégé relationship is a very powerful professional development tool. These results support that contention.

Neither sample reported utilizing graduate programs as a source for mentor-protégé relationships, however, both groups reported the work setting provided opportunities for these types of relationships. Authors discussing the under representation of minorities and women in higher education leadership roles often cite the lack of role models/mentors for females and minorities as contributing to this issue. Demographic data collected in the course of this study suggests that the community college leaders seen as exemplary by their peers were almost exclusively white males. Results from this study suggest that participation in one of more mentor-protégé relationships as a protégé is a powerful tool for advancement in administrative rank. These results further suggest that for those that desire to make senior leadership of community colleges more inclusive, programs which provide viable mentors to capable females and minorities may make a valuable contribution.

Question #7: While the majority of presidents from both samples reported utilizing peer networks to assist them in preparing for, and assuming their presidency, a statistically significant larger number of presidents from the outstanding/leading sample used peer networks in this way (82% versus 69%). The most common source for all respondents for developing peer networks that assisted with becoming a community college president was a previous community college work setting. For outstanding/leading presidents, graduate programs provided the next most prolific source of peer networks that assisted with preparation for a presidency while normative presidents found that social/business settings provided the second most common setting for peer networks that assisted with preparation for a presidency.

Within this study's population, outstanding/leading presidents are more likely to report having received valuable assistance from others, both mentors and peers, than are normative presidents. These results suggest that even in an age of increasingly complex and impersonal environments, senior leadership of community colleges remains an endeavor dependent to a great extent on human relationships.

Question #8: Based on the literature reviewed and the proliferation of leadership training seminars, short courses and other development opportunities, it was hypothesized that the outstanding/leading presidents would have participated in leadership development activities outside of their graduate programs at a rate higher than the normative presidents. Leadership competencies can be identified, taught, mastered and therefore, presidents that have received preparation for leadership via leadership development activities should perform at higher levels than those that have not received these type of experiences. Data from this study's population not only failed to support this hypotheses, they indicated results opposite from those hypothesized. Outstanding/leading presidents, prior to their first presidency, participated in leadership development activities outside of their graduate programs at a statistically significant lower rate than did normative presidents (24% versus 44%).

While this study's primary focus is on preparation for a community college presidency, it is important to note that after they achieved their presidencies, outstanding/leading presidents participated in leadership development activities at a much greater rate than did normative presidents (65% versus 39%). While questions of cause and effect are beyond the design of this study, these data raise numerous issues related to the relationships between participation in leadership development activities and inclusion in the outstanding/leading sample. For example, were the leadership abilities of the peer selected outstanding/leading presidents so exemplary, so intuitive, that they did not require preparation in addition to their graduate programs to achieve positions of outstanding/leading senior leadership? Or, at the time of achieving their first community college presidency, were these presidents normative (average) and did their subsequent higher rate of participation in leadership development activities prepare them with leadership skills that resulted in their peers selecting them as outstanding/leading?

Question #9: Almost all of the responding community college presidents reported both knowledge of contemporary technology and frequent examples of personal daily use. Very little difference was observed between the normative sample and the outstanding/leading sample in regard to knowledge of contemporary technology.

The survey instrument use numerous questions related to personal computer use and a "knowledge of technology" self report Likert scale to attempt to sort the technologically literate from those less technologically inclined. These data suggest that technology, particularly utilization of personal computers to aid in both instruction and administration, has become so common place in community colleges that categories of personal computer literacy are no longer valid for identifying the technologically advanced from the mainstream. Better measures of technological proficiency are needed if questions regarding the relationship between knowledge of technology and exemplary leadership of community colleges are to be answered.

Composite Outstanding/leading Community College President: Just as police artists can make a sketch based on descriptions from several witnesses, this study's data provide information which forms the basis of a composite picture of an outstanding/leading community college president. Developed this way, the composite outstanding/leading community college president is quite clearly a married white male. He is about 54 years old, has served as a community college president for 11 years and has been at his current institution for 9 years. He achieved his first community college presidency at 43 years of age.

He leads a comprehensive community college of about 7,200 students (4,000 FTE) located in the Upper Midwest. He holds a Ph.D. with a major in Higher

Education/Community College Leadership. While claiming not to be pursuing a research agenda, he both presents at professional meetings and publishes regularly. Those who work with him consider him a change agent which is consistent with previous training he has received and how he sees himself. He has extensive previous community college work experience, however, he did not follow the traditional academic track to his presidency and he most likely did not teach full time in a community college. He is most likely in his first presidency.

There is a fifty/fifty chance that he participated as a protégé in a mentor-protégé relationship and a much greater chance that he utilized peer groups to help him prepare for, and achieve his presidency. His peer groups were based on relationships developed in previous community college work experiences and his graduate program. Previous to his first presidency, he did not participate in leadership preparation activities beyond his graduate program however, after becoming a community college president he has attended leadership development activities. He is knowledgeable of contemporary technology, but no more so than most senior community college leaders.

Recommendations for practice: In several cases, results of this study were contrary to commonly held beliefs about preparation for senior leadership of community colleges. The apparent relationship between the study of higher education/community college leadership as a terminal degree major and selection as an exemplary community college president by a peer group of community college presidents is one example. Another example of a result that might be considered surprising is the outstanding/leading presidents low rate of participating in leadership development activities prior to their first presidency when compared to the normative presidents. Based upon the very limited amount of previous research into preparation of exemplary community college leaders, the limited geographical scope of this study, the small sample sizes utilized and the surprising nature of several of this study's results, the first recommendation for practice is that this study be replicated on a much broader scope. Ideally, the next study will be designed in such a manner as to eliminate the geographical limitations of this study, utilize much larger samples and use more conservative significance levels for statistical analysis.

Results from this study indicate that peer selected exemplary community college leaders are predominantly white males. This result is disappointing given the extensive efforts expended on issues of inclusion in community college administration. This study further suggests that a positive relationship may exist between the following factors and being identified as an outstanding/leading community college president by other presidents; a) completion of a terminal degree, b) study of higher education/community college leadership, c) scholarly publishing and presentations, d) preparation as a agent of change, e) following non-traditional paths to the presidency, f) participating as a protégé in a mentor-protégé relationship, g) utilization of peer networks-particularly those based on relationships established in a graduate program, and h) a knowledge of contemporary technology. Note that data from this study suggests that participation in leadership development activities outside of their graduate programs prior to a candidates first presidency does not contribute to exemplary leadership development. The second recommendation for practice is that increased numbers of female and minority candidates that aspire to community college presidencies be provided counseling that describes the importance of factors a-h listed above and that these candidates be provided increased opportunities to pursue the identified factors.

Keim (1994) documented the declining numbers of graduate students enrolled in

programs specifically focused on community college preparation, as well as noting that the number of graduates from programs focused on preparation for community college service had also declined. She further noted the small size of most of the community college focused graduate programs, the limited faculty resources, and the "paucity of published data about community college preparation programs" (p. 59). Based upon the relationship discovered between the systematic study of community college leadership and identification as an outstanding/leading community college president, the third recommendation for practice suggests strengthening the nations graduate programs which focus on the preparation of the next generation of community college leaders. Organizations who's mission includes the improvement of education may find that one of the most cost effective means to address effect educational reform is through the support of graduate educational programs focused on preparation of community college professionals.

Results from this study indicate that graduate programs designed to prepare community college senior leaders should continue to require research, scholarly writing and presentations at professional meetings from their students. Further, these programs should provide those that aspire to senior leadership positions in community colleges with improved counseling related to career paths and leadership preparation factors. Additionally, data generated through this study suggests that graduate programs should strive to provide their students with peer networking opportunities, training as change agents, mentorship opportunities, and training in contemporary technology.

The next recommendation is directed toward those charged with selecting community college senior leaders, specifically, community college boards of trustees and consultants working for those boards. This study identified numerous differences in the preparation factors of normative presidents versus the preparation factors of outstanding/leading presidents. It is highly likely that if these results are confirmed by additional study, community college boards of trustees can increase their likelihood of selecting an exemplary president by structuring the expected qualifications of their president to more closely match the backgrounds of outstanding/leading community college presidents. For example, a statistically significant difference was found to be present between the outstanding/leading community college presidents and the normative presidents in terminal degree attainment at the time of the survey, with outstanding/leading presidents more likely to have earned a Ph.D. or an Ed.D. than normative presidents. When the respondents first became community college presidents a difference in terminal degree attainment was also present. This result suggests that if the goal is to employ an exemplary community college president, an earned terminal degree should be a minimum requirement.

While requiring a terminal degree as an entry requirement to presidential positions has become common, preferences for specific terminal degree majors are much less common among presidential position postings. Terminal degree majors which focus on higher education/community college leadership were a preparation factor that displayed a statistically significant positive relationship with being identified as an exemplary community college president. This result suggests that a terminal degree major in higher education/community college leadership should be listed at least as a desirable qualification on community college presidential job postings. Additional factors displayed by outstanding/leading community college presidents that could provide guidance in identification of qualifications for a presidential candidates include: a) the outstanding/leading presidents published and presented scholarly work at a much higher rate than did normative presidents, b) the

outstanding/leading presidents received more preparation as change agents than normative presidents have received, c) the outstanding/leading presidents displayed a very high rate of non-traditional paths to their presidencies, and d) the outstanding/leading presidents were more involved in both peer networks and mentorship relationships than were the normative presidents.

It is common to observe previous community college teaching listed as a minimum requirement in community college senior leadership position postings. Interestingly, the outstanding/leading community college presidents identified in this study reported very low rates (29%) of previous full time community college teaching experience with only slightly more than half of the outstanding/leading presidents having taught part time. This result suggests that the requirement of previous community college teaching experience as a minimum for entry into a presidency may limit the probability of recruiting a candidate that will develop into an outstanding/leading president.

The last recommendation for practice is to better inform current mid-level community college practitioners on preparation factors and career paths so that they can make more informed decisions regarding their professional development. Literature reviewed for this study strongly suggested that the majority of the next generation of senior community college leader are already employed as mid-level professionals in community college systems. For example, Vaughan (1995) notes, "Since the mid-1960s, community college trustees have turned increasingly to community colleges-to their own-when selecting top level administrators" (p. 2). Information regarding professional development activities that have been beneficial to exemplary senior community college leaders should be made available to current community college practitioners. Examples would include the strong link between a terminal degree major in higher education/community college leadership and identification as an outstanding/leading community college president, the high rate of involvement in both peer networks and mentor-protégé relationships reported by the outstanding/leading presidents, and the important role scholarly publications and presentation appear to play in the life of exemplary community college senior leaders. Additionally, information regarding career tracks, particularly the viability of non-traditional paths to community college presidencies pursued be the majority of the outstanding/leading presidents should be made available to future community college leaders.

Questions for further research: Limitations of this study include small sample sizes, limited geographic scope, very limited amounts of previous research into preparation of exemplary community college leaders to build upon, numerous potential difficulties in techniques used to identify exemplary leaders and a research design that does not address the issue of causation. Several of these issues could be addressed by replicating this study with larger samples and expanded geographic boundaries. If results were consistent with those reported from this effort, inferences could be made with much greater conviction.

Additional areas that warrant research include exploring the causal relationships between various preparation actions and demonstrated exemplary leadership skills. Identification of preparation factors in addition to the nine cited in this study would also be very useful.

Even if links can be established between preparation activities performed 10 or 15 years ago and exemplary leadership, questions exist about the ability of those preparation activities to provide similar results in today's environment. Efforts that identify viable current and future preparation activities that will contribute to preparing the next generation of

community college leaders for exemplary service would be very beneficial.

George Vaughan (1983) noted that "no organization is any better than its leaders" (p. 18). It has been the intent of this effort to contribute to the understanding of the preparation of exemplary community college leaders. Hopefully, improved leadership preparation practices will result and ultimately, stronger community colleges.

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